
Manner: TRAFFIC

During the calendar year 2001, the Medical Examiner's Office participated in the investigation of 220 traffic fatalities. In 2001 there were 142 traffic deaths where the collision occurred in King County compared to 124 in 2000, 116 in 1999 and 119 in 1998. In 2001, 35% (78/220) of all traffic deaths were the result of collisions occurring outside of King County with the injured transferred to hospitals in the county, primarily Harborview Medical Center. Because death occurred in King County, they came under the Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. This is comparable to 38% (77/201) in 2000 and 42% (84/200) in 1999. Although these deaths are classified "accident" for death certification, the preferred term is "motor vehicle collision".

Forty-two percent (93/220) of the traffic fatalities were motor vehicle drivers. Teenage drivers (16-19 years of age) were 11% (10/93) of the driver deaths in 2001 compared to 12% (11/90) in 2000 and 8% (8/96) in 1999. Twenty-two percent of vehicle driver deaths (20/93) were people between the ages of 20 and 29. Seventeen percent of driver deaths (16/93) were adults between the ages of 30 and 39. Male drivers represented 62% (58/93) of driver deaths as compared to 38% for female drivers (35/93).

Of the 220 traffic fatalities in 2001, 56, were passengers representing 25% of the total (56/220). Two deaths involved vehicle occupants of unknown seating position. In 2001, teenagers (13-19 years old) accounted for 10 passenger deaths and one other occupant death. There were eight passenger deaths of children (12 years of age or younger).

Blood ethanol (alcohol) statistics are presented to describe the role of alcohol in traffic deaths. However, it should be noted that in many cases someone other than the person who died was under the influence of alcohol and directly responsible for the accident. The Medical Examiner determines the blood alcohol levels of persons who die, not of everyone involved in the incident. In addition blood alcohol is not tested in persons who die after surviving more than 24 hours, because in those deaths the alcohol has had time to metabolize¹. Therefore, blood alcohol figures presented in this report are not a total description of the role of alcohol in traffic collisions. In 33% (25/75) of drivers tested, blood ethanol was present. In 18 vehicle driver deaths, no alcohol determination was performed. Passenger fatalities showed the presence of alcohol in 31% (14/45) of victims tested.

¹See "Explanation of Data" for criteria for blood alcohol testing.

Of the 93 vehicle driver deaths, 36 (39%) were known to be wearing restraints. This is comparable to 39% (35/90) in 2000 and 29% (28/96) in 1999. The rest were either not restrained or their restraint use was not known. Of the vehicle drivers who died at the scene of the collision and who tested positive for blood alcohol, 60% (15/25) were either unrestrained or it was unknown whether they were wearing restraints.

Motorcycle riders accounted for 10% (21/220) of traffic fatalities. All twenty-one of the motorcycle fatalities were drivers. Twenty of the motorcycle drivers were male and one was female. Ninety percent (19/21) of motorcycle fatalities were known to be wearing helmets. In one motorcycle death, there was no evidence of a helmet, and in one fatality the use of a helmet was unknown. All 21 of the motorcyclist fatalities were tested for the presence of blood alcohol. Four, or 19% (4/21), had a detectable amount of alcohol at the time of autopsy.

Pedestrians constituted 18% (40/220) of traffic fatalities. The majority of pedestrian deaths were male 68% (27/40). Of the pedestrian fatalities who were tested, 37% (13/35) had detectable amounts of alcohol present in their blood at the time of death.

There were seven (7) bicyclist deaths in 2001. One (1) was not wearing a helmet and in three (3) deaths, this information was indicated as unknown.

Graph 7-1

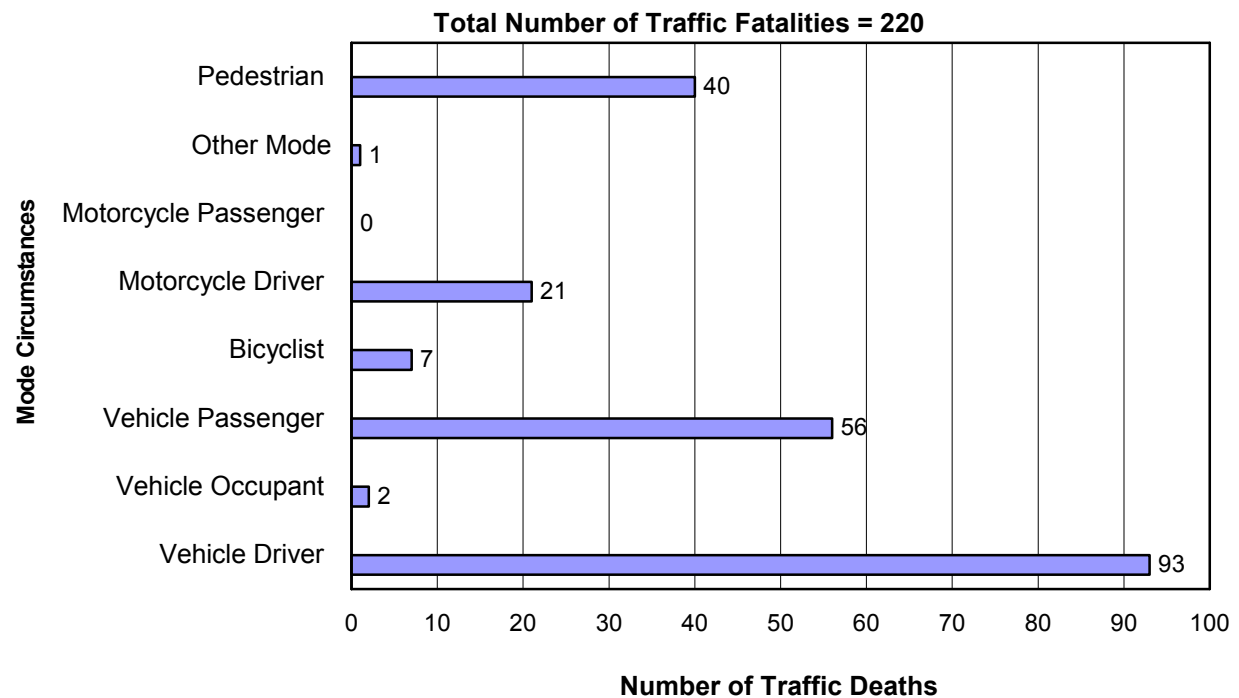
Traffic Fatality Circumstances in
2001

Table 7-1 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Race of the Decedent

CIRCUMSTANCES / GENDER	RACE					SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER		
Vehicle Driver	83	3	2	1	4		93
<i>Male</i>	52	1	2	0	3	58	
<i>Female</i>	31	2	0	1	1	35	
Vehicle Occupant	2	0	0	0	0		2
<i>Male</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Vehicle Passenger	40	8	4	1	3		56
<i>Male</i>	25	2	0	0	1	28	
<i>Female</i>	15	6	4	1	2	28	
Bicycle	5	1	1	0	0		7
<i>Male</i>	4	1	1	0	0	6	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Motorcycle Driver	20	0	1	0	0		21
<i>Male</i>	19	0	1	0	0	20	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Motorcycle Passenger	0	0	0	0	0		0
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Other Mode	1	0	0	0	0		1
<i>Male</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pedestrian	28	1	6	3	2		40
<i>Male</i>	18	1	3	3	2	27	
<i>Female</i>	10	0	3	0	0	13	
Total	179	13	14	5	9		220
Percent	81%	6%	6%	2%	4%		

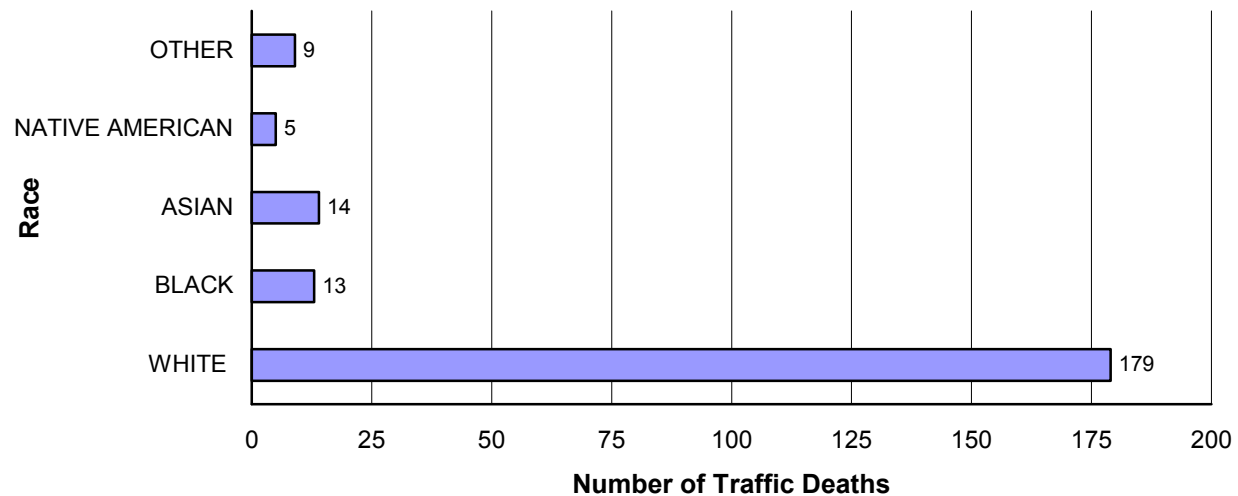
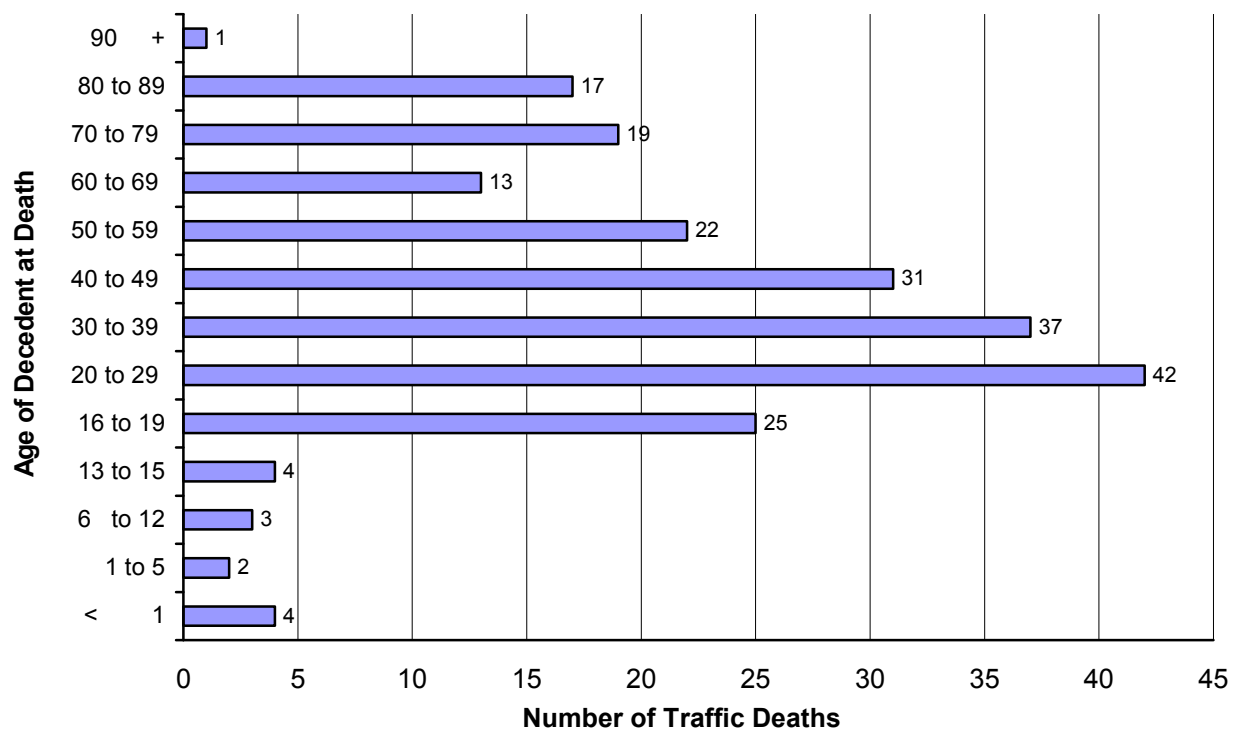
Graph 7-2 Traffic Fatalities and Race of the Decedent**Graph 7-3 Traffic Fatalities and Age Group of the Decedent**

Table 7-2 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Age Group of the Decedent

Circumstances / Gender		AGE GROUP (YEARS)													SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
		< 1	1 to 5	6 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 79	80 to 89	90 +		
Vehicle Driver		0	0	0	0	10	20	16	13	11	4	10	8	1	93	
Male		0	0	0	0	6	13	11	9	5	3	5	5	1	58	
Female		0	0	0	0	4	7	5	4	6	1	5	3	0	35	
Vehicle Occupant		0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Male		0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Female		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Vehicle Passenger		4	2	2	2	8	14	4	3	1	5	5	6	0	56	
Male		2	1	0	1	4	7	3	1	1	2	2	4	0	28	
Female		2	1	2	1	4	7	1	2	0	3	3	2	0	28	
Bicyclist		0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	
Male		0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	
Female		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Motorcycle Driver		0	0	0	0	1	5	6	6	2	1	0	0	0	21	
Male		0	0	0	0	1	5	6	6	1	1	0	0	0	20	
Female		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Motorcycle Passenger		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Male		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Female		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Other Mode		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
Male		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
Female		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pedestrian		0	0	1	2	4	2	6	9	7	2	4	3	0	40	
Male		0	0	1	0	3	1	5	9	4	2	1	1	0	27	
Female		0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	3	0	3	2	0	13	
Total		4	2	3	4	25	42	37	31	22	13	19	17	1	220	
Percent		2	1	1	2	11	19	17	14	10	6	9	8	0		

Table 7-3 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Gender of the Decedent

CIRCUMSTANCES	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Vehicle Driver	58	35	93
Vehicle Occupant	1	1	2
Vehicle Passenger	28	28	56
Bicyclist	6	1	7
Motorcycle Driver	20	1	21
Motorcycle Passenger	0	0	0
Other Mode	1	0	1
Pedestrian	27	13	40
Total	141	79	220
Percent	64%	36%	

Table 7-4 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Use of Restraint/Helmet ³

CIRCUMSTANCES				TOTAL
	Used Safety Device	No Safety Device Used	Unknown	
Vehicle Driver	36	29	28	93
Vehicle Occupant	0	0	2	2
Vehicle Passenger	15	41	0	56
Bicyclist	3	1	3	7
Motorcycle Driver	19	1	1	21
Motorcycle Passenger	0	0	0	0
Other Mode	1	0	0	1
Total	74	72	34	180
Percent	41%	40%	19%	

³ Excludes Pedestrian Deaths

Table 7-5 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Blood Alcohol Test Results

CIRCUMSTANCES	TESTED		NOT TESTED	TOTAL
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE		
Vehicle Driver	25	50	18	93
Vehicle Occupant	2	0	0	2
Vehicle Passenger	14	31	11	56
Bicyclist	2	2	3	7
Motorcycle Driver	4	17	0	21
Motorcycle Passenger	0	0	0	0
Other Mode	0	0	1	1
Pedestrian	13	22	5	40
Total	60	122	38	220
Percent	27%	55%	17%	

Table 7-6 Blood Alcohol Levels of Traffic Fatalities who DIED AT THE SCENE of the Accident

CIRCUMSTANCES	BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL (Grams Percent)					TOTAL
	NONE	.01-.09	.10-.19	.20-.29	.30+	
Vehicle Driver	9	2	5	6	0	22
Vehicle Occupant	0	1	1	0	0	2
Vehicle Passenger	12	5	5	1	0	23
Bicyclist	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycle Driver	7	0	0	0	0	7
Motorcycle Passenger	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pedestrian	6	1	2	5	0	14
Total	34	9	13	12	0	68
Percent	50%	13%	19%	18%	0%	

Graph 7-4 **Blood Alcohol Levels of Traffic Fatalities who
DIED AT THE SCENE of the Accident**

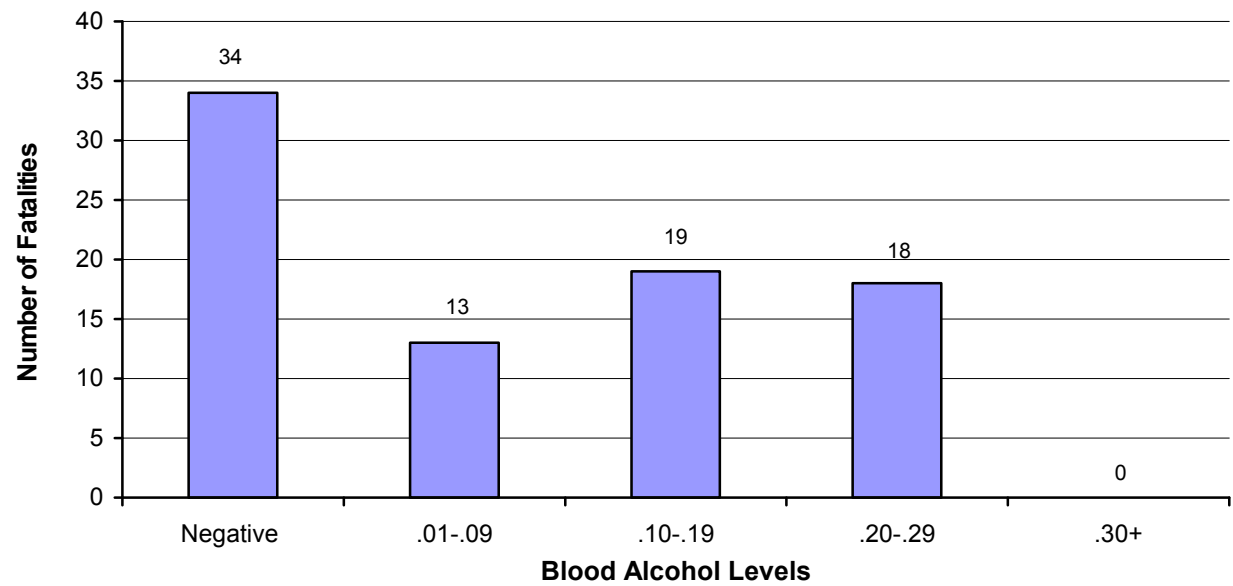


Table 7-7 Time of Fatal Traffic Incident

TIME OF DAY	TOTAL	PERCENT
12:01 AM - 3:00 AM	33	15
3:01 AM - 6:00 AM	14	6
6:01 AM - 9:00 AM	19	9
9:01 AM - Noon	27	12
12:01 PM - 3:00 PM	26	12
3:01 PM - 6:00 PM	32	15
6:01 PM - 9:00 PM	35	16
9:01 PM -Midnight	33	15
Unknown	1	0
TOTAL	220	

Graph 7-5**Time of Fatal Traffic Incident**